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AUTHOR Cross, Mary Catherine
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ABSTRACT

This study investigated how returned Peace Corps teachers viewed the Peace Corps experience and its impact on their self-efficacy and cultural awareness. Participants were 154 returned Peace Corps teachers who completed a questionnaire that contained demographic questions, a self-efficacy scale, and a teacher-efficacy scale. A subset of 15 teachers were interviewed to examine cultural awareness, self-efficacy, teacher-efficacy, and the importance of the Peace Corps experience. A group of 6 teachers out of the 15 were observed in their classrooms. The observation focused on practices that were associated with high self-efficacy teachers and effective multicultural teachers. Data analysis indicated teachers ranked the Peace Corps experience highly in its effect on their self-efficacy and cultural awareness, and less highly in its effect on their teaching. The results indicate that the Peace Corps functioned as a mastery experience. The effect was robust and persistent. Returned volunteers attributed many changes to the Peace Corps, even if the experience had been more than 30 years ago. Teachers ranked the Peace Corps experience as very important in affecting their personality and somewhat important in affecting their teaching. The questionnaire is appended. (SM)

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Self Efficacy and Cultural Awareness: A Study of Returned Peace Corps Teachers

by

Mary Catherine Cross
Montgomery County Public Schools
Maryland

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the
American Educational Research Association
April 16, 1998

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Self Efficacy and Cultural Awareness: A Study of Returned Peace Corps Teachers

By Mary Catherine Cross

Statement of Problem: Peace Corps volunteers who return to the U.S. to teach are often viewed as having special qualities that enhance their teaching. Returned Peace Corps teachers are consistently characterized in positive terms because of their spirit, their can-do attitude, and their ability to triumph in the face of difficult school situations. This ability to thrive is very much like what Bandura termed self-efficacy: the belief that one is capable of carrying out the actions needed to manage situations, even in the face of difficulties. Teachers with high self-efficacy believe they affect student learning positively. Returned Peace Corps teachers are also credited with having cultural awareness which helps them succeed in teaching students from diverse backgrounds. The purpose of this study was to explore how returned Peace Corps teachers viewed the Peace Corps experience and its impact on their self-efficacy and cultural awareness.

Method: The study consisted of a questionnaire, interviews and observations. Participants for this study were 154 teachers representative of approximately 30,000 returned Peace Corps volunteer teachers, by country and decade of service. A random cluster sample of teachers who were members of two regional returned volunteer associations completed the questionnaire. The questionnaire contained demographic questions, the Sherer et al. (1982) General Self-Efficacy scale and the Gibson and Dembo Teacher Efficacy Scale (1984). Interviews were done with a smaller subset of 15 teachers. Cultural awareness, self-efficacy, teacher efficacy and the importance of the Peace Corps experience were explored in the interviews. Six teachers in this smaller sample were also be observed in their classrooms. The observations focused on practices that are associated with high self-efficacy teachers and effective multicultural teachers.

Results: Questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Interviews and observations were taped, transcribed, and analyzed. Data from questionnaires and interviews indicated that these teachers had high self-efficacy. A developed sense of cultural awareness was indicated in the interviews, but was not always observed in classroom visits. The data from the questionnaire and the interviews indicated mixed results in the area of teacher efficacy. The teachers ranked the Peace Corps experience

highly in its effect on their self-efficacy and cultural awareness, and less highly in its effect on their teaching.

Conclusions: Results indicated that the Peace Corps functioned as a mastery experience. The volunteers described the experience as difficult for a variety of reasons, but credited the Peace Corps with developing their enhanced sense of self-efficacy. The effect was robust and persistent, returned volunteers attributed changes caused by the Peace Corps, even if the experience had been more than thirty years ago. Feelings of self-confidence, willingness to take on challenges, and the ability to thrive in difficult situations were attributed to their experience in the Peace Corps. Most volunteers reported increased cultural awareness as a result of the Peace Corps experience, especially a modified view of the world. The results indicated that most volunteers had a strong belief in their ability to teach. However, they also believed that a student's learning was affected not only by their teaching, but also by factors outside their control. The teachers ranked the Peace Corps experience as very important in affecting their personality and as somewhat important in affecting their teaching.

Introduction

This study will address the nature of returned Peace Corps volunteers who are teachers. Peace Corps volunteers who return to the U.S. to teach are often viewed as having some special quality that enhances their teaching.

When the first group of volunteers came home in 1963, the principal of Cardozo High School in Washington, DC recruited them to teach. She described the teachers she recruited as having an ability to connect with their students, in spite of the cultural differences between the volunteers and the students. The ex-Peace Corps volunteers were perceived by the principal, students and staff as self-confident, flexible, mature, culturally sensitive, and "uniquely equipped to establish meaningful relationships with deprived youth" (Washington, 1964, p.13).

Other educators attributed returned Peace Corps volunteers who are teachers with special qualities. Calvert (1966) pointed out that returned volunteers could relate to the culture of "disadvantaged" students (p. 16). Kozoll (1968) applauded the success of returned volunteers with inner city students because of sensitivity to cultural differences and commitment to service. In 1970, Knowles, Pietras, and Urich suggested that Peace Corps "Veterans" be recruited for work in urban schools because of the qualities they have gained from their experience abroad.

The Cardozo Project was short lived, but another program emerged to recruit returned Peace Corps teachers to work in urban schools with the founding of the Peace Corps Fellows/USA Program in 1985. The New York City Public Schools recruited returned volunteers as teachers for schools that were hard to staff in Harlem, the South Bronx, and Bedford-Stuyvesant. These Peace Corps Fellows proved successful in teaching jobs in schools with a high percentage of troubled minority students and relatively few resources. (Fernandez, Guerriere & Huffaker, 1994). These returned Volunteers were targeted for recruitment by the school districts because of their perceived special qualities. "Committed, resourceful, culturally sensitive, multilingual, and able to deal with high levels of frustration are common descriptions associated with Peace Corps Volunteers" (Fernandez, et al., 1994, p. 13). The Fellows program has now spread nationwide and currently funds master's degrees for returned volunteers at sixteen graduate schools across the country.

Wilson (1986) found in a study of returned Peace Corps volunteers who taught social studies, that the Peace Corps was not the only influence on these teachers, but that all teachers surveyed agreed that the Peace Corps experience had affected their personality. Interviews and classrooms observations provided evidence that returned Peace Corps teachers are aware of and accept differences in people and cultures. They credited the Peace Corps with enlarging

their world view. The teachers in Wilson's study spoke of their ability to deal with problems, and of being adaptable and flexible. The returned volunteers mentioned personal growth as a result of their overseas experience.

The personal growth resulting from international experience can be compared to Bandura's theory of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the belief that one can manage the activities needed to accomplish an objective, "to get the job done." An individual with high self-efficacy has an optimistic view of personal capabilities that is sustained through setbacks (Bandura, 1987). Self-efficacy activates processes that can affect such diverse areas as choices of action to follow, the amount of effort put into a task, the degree of perseverance after failure, and even the amount of stress and depression one experiences (Bandura, 1992).

It is interesting that President Kennedy framed the purpose of the Peace Corps in 1961 as "to get the job done." In his March 1, 1961 address to Congress, he proposed to send Peace Corps volunteers abroad (Haigh, 1966).

> Throughout the world the people of the newly developing nations are struggling for economic and social progress which reflects their deepest desires. ...One of the greatest obstacles to the achievement of this goal is the lack of trained men and women with the skill to teach the young and assist in the operation of development projects - men and women with the capacity to cope with the demands of swiftly evolving economics, and with the dedication to put that capacity to work...
>
> To meet this urgent need for skilled manpower, we are proposing the establishment of a Peace Corps - an

> organization which will recruit and train American volunteers, sending them abroad to work with the people of other nations (J. F. Kennedy, executive order 10924, as quoted in Haigh, 1966, p. 3).

The purpose of the organization was founded on what Bandura later called self-efficacy: the belief that one has what it takes to get the job done.

A successful Peace Corps experience is similar to a mastery experience. In advertisements to recruit prospective volunteers, the U.S. Peace Corps office uses the slogan: "the toughest job you'll ever love." Peace Corps volunteers are faced with myriad difficult and stressful situations. After completing their time abroad, they have gain new beliefs and insights, about the world and about themselves. This newly gained self-referent belief is very much like self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy beliefs applied to teaching are called teacher efficacy. Teacher efficacy has been widely studied as an important component of the way teachers manage their classrooms and foster student learning. Ashton and Webb (1986) and others have found that self-efficacy is an important aspect of teaching and learning in schools. Gibson and Dembo (1986) determined that high self-efficacy in teachers makes them more likely to effectively motivate students to achieve more learning. High efficacy teachers gave more praise and less criticism than low efficacy teachers did. High efficacy teachers were more effective at guiding students to accurate answers by providing hints,

repeating the question, or asking new questions, but low efficacy teachers would go on to other students or to another question before the student arrived at the correct response. Greenwood, Olejnik and Parkay (1990) found that teachers with high scores on teacher efficacy had less stress. Woolfolk and Hoy (1990) surveyed teacher education students and found that high teacher efficacy was related to a more humanistic belief about controlling students. How teacher efficacy is defined and measured differs dramatically from study to study, but in general, high teacher efficacy is associated with positive student outcomes.

Another characteristic of returned volunteer teachers is their cultural awareness. Working overseas for two years in the Peace Corps seems to increase the cultural awareness of volunteers. As student populations in U.S. schools change, Hodgkinson predicted by the year 2020, minority students will make up 46 percent of the population of students in every state (Hodgkinson as cited in Cushner, McClelland, and Safford, 1992). By contrast, U.S. teachers are 88 percent white and 68 percent female (Cushner, et al., 1992). Culturally aware teachers understand the "behavior, physical movements, verbal and nonverbal language, values, worldview, home environment, and learning styles" of students who are culturally different from them (Irvine, 1989, p. 55). Teachers who are culturally aware also have a positive orientation toward minority cultures, "They ...

[are] thoroughly knowledgeable, sensitive, and comfortable about black [and other culturally different] children's language, style of presentation, community values, traditions, rituals, legends, myths, history, symbols, and norms" (Irvine, 1989, p. 57).

Many studies have addressed the lack of cultural awareness in teachers (i.e. McDiarmid, 1990 or Zeichner, 1993). Teacher educators are concerned about how to transform the white, middle class young women that comprise prospective teachers into educators who are aware of practices of other cultures. Multicultural education classes often have limited impact on the attitudes and practices of teachers. This study will determine if returned Peace Corps teachers value their experience for providing cultural awareness, even if it was many years earlier. This study seeks to address the lasting importance of the cross cultural experience in the development of culturally aware attitudes.

Returned Peace Corps teachers are thought to be imbued with a high degree of cultural awareness and other personal qualities that help them be more successful teachers, especially of minority students. Qualities such as the ability to get the job done in the face of difficulties may have existed in the volunteer before enlisting in the Peace Corps. Other factors in the teacher's life may have caused the teacher to gain sensitivity to another culture's point of view. This study attempts to locate the source of the

beliefs about self-efficacy and cultural awareness in returned volunteer teachers.

Methodology

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to describe the characteristics of returned Peace Corps volunteers who are teachers. A sample of returned Peace Corps teachers (n = 154) completed a scale that measured self-efficacy and teacher efficacy. The research sample was comprised of three groups. The first group was a cluster sample of two local organizations for returned Peace Corps volunteers. A second group of subjects was obtained from a nationwide electronic list. A third group also participated in the study, which was not planned for in the initial design. Many of those returned Peace Corps teachers who took part in the study referred the names of other Peace Corps teachers to the researcher, or posted notices in their local newsletters. These referrals comprised the third group.

The instrument contained demographic questions, the General Self-efficacy scale (Sherer M., Maddux, J. E., Mercandante, B., Prentice-Dunn, S., Jacobs, B. & Rogers, R. W., 1992) and the Gibson and Dembo Teacher Efficacy Scale (1984). The Sherer, et al. (1992) scale is a 17 item Likert scale that measures generalized expectations that success in past experiences can indicate future success. The internal

consistency reliability is 0.86. The validity of the scale as a measure of general self-efficacy has been supported by several studies (Sherer, et al. 1992, Sherer & Adams, 1983). The Gibson and Dembo Teacher Efficacy Scale is a 16 item Likert scale with an internal consistency reliability of 0.79. It measures the belief that one has the skills and abilities to bring about student learning oneself and the belief that any teacher has the ability to bring about change in spite of external factors. The validity of the scale as a measure of the construct is supported by a multitrait multimethod analysis.

The Likert responses to the general self-efficacy scale and the teacher efficacy scale were averaged and descriptive statistics were calculated using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version X). The mean scores on each scale were compared to other populations. Compared to a population of normal adults, the returned Peace Corps volunteers had higher self-efficacy. The teacher efficacy mean score of returned Peace Corps teachers was comparable to other populations of teachers.

A subset (n = 15) of these returned volunteer teachers were interviewed. Interviews were the primary means of determining the impact and importance of the Peace Corps experience on teaching. The interviews were loosely structured, but dealt with areas of self-efficacy, teacher efficacy, and cultural awareness. Teachers were asked to recall anecdotes from their Peace Corps experience, then to

explore in detail the feelings and changes associated with the experience. Questions about the returned volunteer's current job led to deeper inquiries about current attitudes and practices of the teacher. Teachers assessed the importance of the impact of the Peace Corps experience on their current job performance. Sample questions are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Sample Interview Questions that Probe Theoretical Constructs

Theoretical Construct	**Questions That Probe Construct**
Cultural Awareness -consciousness of cultures -consciousness of the significance of a person's cultural beliefs have on their behavior and attitudes -works to improve the interaction between students of different cultures -sensitive to differences in the use of verbal language and body language -includes examples from different cultures in lessons	What types of students do you have? Why do you think you student did [said, wrote, acted like, etc.]that? When you do that [lesson, activity] how do you group the students? Why did you decide to group them that way? What drives you choices of [activities, lessons, discussion topics, field trips, etc.]? Why did you decide to do that [activity, lesson, etc.]?
Self Efficacy - gained from a mastery experience -ability to get the job done, in spite of setbacks -remaining on task in spite of difficulties -setting high goals -good analytic problem solving -lower stress in difficult situations	Did you find your Peace Corps experience challenging? What was difficult about it? Was it a positive experience for you? Do you feel the experience changed you? How? What do you feel you learned from the experience? When you are faced with difficulties on your job, how do you handle it? When things get stressful at your school, what do you do? Do you ever set goals for yourself? Your students?

(Table 1 continued)

Theoretical Construct	Questions that Probe Construct
Teacher Efficacy -the belief that teachers can help students to learn -the belief that one is capable of making a difference, even with students who have difficulties learning -does not give up when a student is having difficulties learning -believes ability can be changed and developed through education -favors cooperative interaction and self-discipline in classroom management, rather than punishment and control	Which do you think has a greater influence on a student's success in school, his/her home environment or the teacher? How does a student's home environment affect his/her ability to learn? Do you feel you can get most of your students to learn? Do you feel you can get through even to students with learning difficulties? What do you see as the job of the school? Do you think all children can really succeed? How do you handle a situation when a student [refuses to cooperate, calls out, doesn't do assignments, etc.]?

A smaller subset (n = 6) of the teachers who were interviewed were also observed in their classrooms for at least one class period, which ranged from 40 minutes to 2.5 hours. The observations focused on practices that are associated with high self-efficacy teachers and effective multicultural teachers. Examples of these practices are: time spent in direct instruction; classroom management that is relaxed and friendly; and the exercise of personal authority rather than institutional authority (Glickman & Tamashiro, 1982; Guskey, 1981, 1988; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Brissie, 1987; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990).

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Practices that are associated with effective multicultural teachers and effective teachers of minority students were also recorded in the classroom observations. Effective multicultural teacher behaviors include affirming and respecting the cultures of all the students (Banks, 1989; Foster, 1990, 1993; Sleeter, 1989, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1992a, 1992b). The classroom observations provided specific examples of classroom behavior that were probed in the subsequent interview. The teachers in this smaller subset were observed, interviewed, and tested, in that order.

The interviews and classroom observations were taped, and later transcribed and coded. Photographs and document analysis of material provided by the teachers were also coded and analyzed. The data from the transcripts, fieldnotes, and document analysis comprised the raw data. This raw data was sorted, focused, and organized by the process of data analysis. Summaries written while data was collected, in the form of fieldnote memos, served to organize data as it was being collected (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, pp. 159-160). Data was organized in charts, matrices, and graphs while it was being collected to help summarize findings and analyze various elements of the raw data (p. 164).

Data from interviews and observations was grouped into folders as described in Bogdan and Biklen (1992). Rather than physical folders, electronic folders were used. Data

from transcripts, after being marked to identify the source, were cut and pasted in the appropriate folder (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The coding categories were aligned with the facets of the global constructs: cultural awareness, self-efficacy and teacher efficacy, and importance of the Peace Corps experience. Analysis was limited to those constructs. After analysis, data from the observations was triangulated with the data from instrument and the interviews. Triangulation allows the data from several sources to answer one research query.

Getting the same answer from different sources promoted reliability. Validity was also enhanced by finding the same conclusion through different methods of collecting data (Cohen & Manion, 1989). To increase reliability and validity of the interviews, a draft of the transcript of each teacher's interview was mailed after the interview, with a self-addressed stamped envelope for comments.

Results

A total of 154 returned Peace Corps volunteers who are teachers participated in the study. The descriptors of the teachers participating in the survey for this study indicated that the sample was representative of returned Peace Corps volunteers. The following tables compare the demographic results of this study to the those of the Graul study (US Peace Corps & Graul, 1996) and to data from the

Peace Corps on the total population of returned volunteers. The Graul study included returned volunteers of all occupations, while this study is concerned only with teachers. Table 2 shows the region of service of the volunteers in this study compared to other samples of returned volunteers.

Table 2: Region of Service

Region of Service	Graul & P.C., 1996	US Peace Corps	This study
Inter America	33%	31%	20%
Africa	32%	35%	49%
Asia/Pacific	27%	26%	23%
Europe/Central Asia/Mediterranean	8%	8%	9%

The difference between the number in this study in Inter America and Africa regions reflects the type of program Peace Corps historically has pursued in these countries. In the Inter American countries, community development has been the goal, whereas most teachers have gone to Africa.

Table 3: Decade of Entry on Duty

Decade of entry on duty	Graul & P.C., 1996	US Peace Corps	This study
1961-1969	42%	42%	29%
1970-1979	27%	23%	33%
1980-1989	13%	24%	23%
1990-1996	18% to '93	11%	16%

The data for decade of entry into the Peace Corps is similar to the total population of returned Peace Corps volunteers, with the exception of the 1960's. The population of returned volunteers who are currently K-12 teachers is lower than the number of volunteers who entered in the 1960's, probably because of retirement or advancement to positions of leadership within the school.

Table 4: Educational Level

Educational level	Graul & P.C., 1996 (this included both earned degrees and those the RPCV was ' working on')	This Study (highest degree held)
Bachelors degree	8%	31%
Masters degree	50%	64%
Ph.D.	10%	5%
LL.B. or J.D	3%	0%
MD	2%	0%
Other	5%	0%

The data describing degrees is similar to the returned volunteers in the Graul study. This study asked participants to list their highest degree obtained, while the Graul study asked for the highest degree the RPCV was "working on". It is reasonable to expect that teachers

would hold a higher percentage of master's degrees, since it is a requirement for many teaching positions. One significant finding was that only 18% of returned Peace Corps volunteers in this study worked in elementary school, while 82% work in middle, junior high, or high schools.

The questionnaire consisted of demographic questions, a measure of self-efficacy and of teacher efficacy. The General Self-efficacy Scale measured the belief in the ability to accomplish a task, in spite of difficulties. The overall mean score for the individuals in this study was 1.824 with a standard deviation of 0.488. Descriptive statistics for the General Self-efficacy Scale are reported in Table 5.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for the General Self-efficacy Scale

Statistic	value
mean	1.824
median	1.765
mode	1.706
standard error	0.039
standard deviation	0.488

Items 2, 4, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, and 17 were reversed for scoring as they were in Sherer study (Sherer, et al., 1982). The lower the score, the higher were the self-efficacy expectations.

In Sherer's study (1982) the mean score of 376 college students, from introductory psychology classes, was 2.37 (see note*). In another study of introductory psychology students, Sherer and Adams (1983) found a mean score of 2.21 on the self-efficacy scale. The returned volunteer teachers scored higher than both groups of college students. These results showed that the returned volunteer teachers in this study had higher self-efficacy expectations than the populations in the two studies that were reported in the literature.

The Teacher Efficacy Scale measures the belief in one's ability to teach all children, regardless of their home environment, and the belief that all children can learn. The Likert responses for the Gibson and Dembo Teacher Efficacy Scale (1984) were computed using SPSSX. The overall mean score of was 2.311 and the standard deviation was 0.417. The descriptive statistics for the Teacher Efficacy scale are reported in Table 6.

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*The score from the Sherer (1982) study was converted from a 14 point Likert scale to a 5 point Likert scale to compare to this study. Also, it was reversed, as Sherer used 1 = strongly disagree, while this study used 1 = strongly agree.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics for the Teacher Efficacy Scale

Statistic	value
mean	2.311
median	2.313
mode	2.5
standard error	0.34
standard deviation	0.417

A lower score indicated higher teacher efficacy. Answers for questions 10, 11, 12, 13, and 16 were reversed to compute scores.

Teacher efficacy mean scores were compared to mean scores from other studies (see note*). It should also be noted that, in the other studies, additional items were added to the 16 items used in this study. Woolfolk and Hoy (1990) measured the teacher efficacy of 182 students in a college teacher preparation program and found a mean score of 2.75. Gorell and Hwang (1995) obtained a mean score of 61 senior preservice elementary education students in Korea which was 2.18. Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) found in a study of teacher efficacy of 179 New Jersey elementary school teachers that their mean teacher efficacy score was 2.45. Table 7 shows the mean scores of other studies compared to this study.

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*The scale in each case was converted from a 6 point Likert scale to a 5 point scale and reversed so that 1 = strongly agree, so as to compare with this study.

Table 7: Comparative Values of Mean Scores in Studies of Teacher Efficacy

Study	Mean value of Teacher Efficacy
Gorell and Hwang (1995) Preservice teachers	2.18
this study	**2.31**
Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) Elementary teachers	2.45
Woolfolk and Hoy (1990) Preservice teachers	2.75

Although in self-efficacy the scores for returned Peace Corps teachers were quite different than other populations, teacher efficacy scores were similar to other groups of teachers. It was found in the qualitative portion of this study that the interviews and classroom observations showed that the teachers in this study had beliefs consistent with the ideals of high teacher efficacy, but these beliefs were tempered with pragmatism as well. For example, teachers said that they had the ability to teach every student, even those with learning difficulties, but they were sometimes not able to because of large class sizes, extended student absenteeism, inability of the child to come for extra help or other factors that prevented them from actually interacting with the child.

A Pearson product moment correlation was calculated for the demographic variables and the means of self-efficacy and teacher efficacy. Neither the self-efficacy or teacher efficacy score was correlated to demographic variables of decade of service, years of teaching or highest degree held.

The data indicated that more years of teaching do not increase either self-efficacy or teacher efficacy. In addition, a higher level of education did not correlate to more self-efficacy or higher teacher efficacy. However, the teacher efficacy was significantly correlated to self-efficacy at $r = 0.506$ ($p < 0.01$). Although returned Peace Corps teachers had high self-efficacy scores, their teacher efficacy scores were comparable to other populations of teachers and education majors. Within this population of high self-efficacy individuals, teacher efficacy is correlated to self-efficacy. The correlation indicated that the higher the self-efficacy, the higher the teacher efficacy. High self-efficacy individuals had strong beliefs in the ability to get the job done, in spite of difficulties. This belief was correlated to confidence in the ability to teach all students, even those who have difficulties.

It is logical to expect this correlation because of the relationship between the constructs of self-efficacy and of teacher efficacy. Teacher efficacy is the belief of self-efficacy applied to teaching. This correlation confirms the conceptual relationship between these two measures.

For the qualitative portion of this study, 15 returned Peace Corps teachers were interviewed. The teachers were interviewed over the phone or in face to face interviews that lasted from 40 minutes to 1 hour and 15 minutes.

Demographic information about the volunteers who were interviewed is shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Demographic Information on Teachers who were Interviewed

Name (pseudo-nym)	Country and years of service	Job in Peace Corps	Peace Corps right out of college or graduate school?	Years experience, degree	Type of school	Level and subjects taught
Mark Bowie*	Philippines, 1987-89	Agroforestry	yes	7 years, M.A.	private, middle, urban	Science
Sally Cohen*	Nigeria, 1964-66	Science teacher, girls high school	yes	31 years, M.A.	magnet high school, urban	Biology
Michael Dorsey*	Micronesia, 1993-95	English teacher	no, 1 year Park Service and taught 2 years in Taiwan first (English)	5 years, B.A. (M.A. 1998)	middle school, urban	Geography, Reading
Emily Faust	Dominican Republic, 1991-93	Community Development	yes	4 years, M.A.	college prep. and elementary urban	ESOL
Pamela Hedges*	Phillipines, 1963-66	co-teacher	yes	19 years teaching, 4.5 years administrator, M.A.	private, middle, urban	Social Studies
Frank Hubner	Costa Rica, 1963-65	High School, English	yes	30 years, B.A.	middle school, urban	Social Studies, ESOL
Jennifer Kercher	Sierra Leone, 1983-86	High School, Science	no, 2 years odd jobs first	6.5 years Peace Corps office, 5 years teaching, M.A.	high school, suburban	Science
Joanna Lucas	Malaysia 1965-68	High School, Science, English, PE	yes	17 years, Ph.D.	high school, urban	Science, home and hospital

(Table 8, Continued)

Name (pseudo-nym)	Country and years of service	Job in Peace Corps	Peace Corps right out of college or graduate school?	Years experience, degree	Type of School	Level and Subjects taught
Laura Myers	Costa Rica, 1986-88	Special Ed. consultant	no, taught 3 years first (elementary, jr. high)	13 years, Ph.D.	formerly jr. high school, now rural college, prospective teachers	Special Educa- tion
Mary Noble*	Togo 1988-91	Appropriate Technology	no, taught 11 years first (university)	11 years university, then 6 years high school, M.A.	high school, urban	Art
Marshall Owen	Phillipines, 1987-89	Fisheries extensionist	no, 4 years geologist first	6 years geologist, 3 years teaching, M.A.	middle school, rural	Science
Dave Strong*	Paraguay, 1977-81	Environmental Education	yes	14 years teaching, 1.5 years at Wildlife Federation, M.A	private, middle, urban	Science
Patrick Sweeney	Venezuela, 1964-66	High school P.E., Math, English	yes	34 years, 2 M.A.s	high school, suburban	Math
Sandra Thomas	Costa Rica, 1966-70	Community Development	no, taught 1 year first (high school)	7 years, 2 M.A.'s.	public, high school, suburban	Spanish
Jeanie Woods	Jamaica, 1974-76	English, Reading teacher, high school	no, taught four years first (6th grade)	27 years, M.A.	elemen- tary, public, urban	Montessori early childhood

note: *these teachers were also observed in their classrooms

The coding categories that emerged from the interviews are shown in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Coding Categories for Interviews

Self-efficacy
- Developed through a Mastery Experience
- Self-confidence
- Ability to get the Job done in spite of Difficulties
- Willingness to take Challenges
- Lower Stress in Difficult Situations

Cultural Awareness
- Consciousness of the Significance of Culture
- Empathy for people of different cultures
- Interest in working with people of different cultures
- Sensitive to differences in people because of culture
- Helping Students from other Cultures get Along
- Modified world view
- Using Examples from Other Cultures in Class

Teacher Efficacy
- Belief in Ability to Help Students Learn
- Does not Give Up in the Face of Difficulties with Students
- Believes a Poor Home Environment can be Overcome through Education
- Believes Ability can be Developed through Education
- Favors Cooperative Interaction and Classroom Management

Importance of Peace Corps Experience
- Impact of Peace Corps due to Age at time of Service
- Peace Corps Changed Career Goals
- Peace Corps Caused Personal Change
- Peace Corps Caused Change in Teaching
- Rank of Importance of Peace Corps Experience

The two year Peace Corps experience served as a mastery experience for these volunteers. A mastery experience is described as a successful performance accomplishment. Efficacy beliefs gained from mastery experiences are usually generalized and can influence the expectation of success in future situations. The returned volunteers had widely varied types of experiences. For some, the living

conditions were difficult. Other returned volunteers had very comfortable living conditions but described stresses on the job as arduous. For others the challenge was living and working in another culture. Regardless of the reason for the Peace Corps experience being difficult, all the volunteers interviewed reported that it was challenging, but that they had survived and had been changed by the experience. A successful performance experience leads to self-efficacy beliefs that will transfer to other areas of life (Bandura, 1995).

Ten of the volunteers described their living conditions as harsh. They mentioned heat, insects, lack of a variety of food, no clean water and getting diseases as specifically contributing to the challenge of surviving the Peace Corps. Michael Dorsey, a volunteer in Micronesia, described getting to his site, an island in the Pacific.

> They [Peace Corps] sent me on a 4 day ship journey to an atoll... One time I was on Satawan, that was my island, from January to June, I was there for 6 months without mail, just with infrequent radio contact. Yeah, I wanted to E.T. [early terminate], but I couldn't get off the island... The boats cannot come in close to the island, because of the coral reefs. So in my lagoon anyway, there was a channel where a ship could enter. On most atolls, the ship has to stay in the open water, which is incredible. I mean, you're trying to get off this ship on this cord ladder, and it's going up and down, the waves are soaking you. I'm standing on this ladder, and waves would whack the hell out of me. Oh, it was a nightmare! I'm lucky to be alive.

Nine volunteers specifically mentioned the heat, getting used to working and living in tropical heat, with no air conditioning. Keeping food from spoiling, sweating all the time, trying to get a good night's sleep in the tropics were all reported.

Four volunteers specifically expressed that since they had made it through the Peace Corps, they now felt they could do anything, even if the Peace Corps had been thirty years ago. Pat Sweeney said, "I couldn't wait to get to the States, there was nothing I couldn't handle." Michael Dorsey said, "Oh, there's nothing I can't do. That's the problem, I think everything is so easy... when I was on Satawan, I said, if I can take this much crap, ...[then I could do anything]." Marshall Owen reported a similar transformation:

> It gave me a lot more confidence. Especially to come back and switch careers, it seemed much easier. I remember coming back and being worried about student teaching. I remember thinking, well, if you made it through the Peace Corps, then student teaching shouldn't be that tough.

The feelings of self-confidence that were fostered in the Peace Corps have remained robust, despite the length of time since that experience. For seven teachers that were interviewed, that intervening time between Peace Corps and the interview had been greater than twenty years, and for four of those, greater than thirty years. Yet, the former volunteers still described the Peace Corps as the source of their feelings of self-confidence.

People with high self-efficacy persist at their job in the face of failures or setbacks. They attribute failure to circumstances beyond their control, not to their own lack of ability. In addition, they remain on task, despite failure. Five returned volunteers referred to their ability to carry out an assignment, in spite of a state of affairs that they found challenging or difficult. Circumstances that the volunteers faced in the Peace Corps led them to believe that they could accomplish their goal, no matter what obstacles they faced. They gained direct experience in succeeding in their assigned jobs in the face of challenges. This belief has carried over into their lives now. The ability to get the job done in spite of problems also generalizes to teaching. When Dave Strong started at the school where he has worked for fourteen years, he disclosed that things were much different in the Science department than they are today.

> I didn't know what resources they're going to give me, but I knew I could handle it, because I've been in situations where there was nothing at all. Up until about a week before I was supposed to start, at [my school] they had no books, no curriculum, no homework, I didn't even know where I was going to teach. It was unbelievable, but it didn't phase me... you sort of get the sense that whatever resources you've got, you'll make something happen. That's a direct result of Peace Corps.

The belief that returned volunteers can take on tough jobs and get them done in spite of difficult circumstances gets them through, even many years later.

Individuals with high self-efficacy view demands as challenges, not as threats. Challenging situations enhance their motivation. They choose challenging jobs that they are well suited for, and which allow them to form networks with others like themselves. Ten of the volunteers interviewed mentioned that they had chosen challenges since the Peace Corps. Pat Sweeney returned to New York City to work in a high school, and concurrently helped start a night school for adult immigrants to get their high school equivalency.

> I got into the National Teacher Corps in New York City, so I taught in Harlem for 2 years. And this was the time when the National Teacher Corps had just started, it was not financed.... Those were the times when Martin Luther King was killed, it was exciting times. Riots and all going right on.
>
> When we started out [the Volunteer school for Adults] we used plywood for blackboards, we did the Math right on the plywood. It was like being in the Peace Corps... except in New York City.... I've always done that [taking on challenges]. I always wanted a challenge. I never want to do something someone else can do. I do things that can't be done.

Several volunteers described the reasons for moving to a new school, or taking on a new assignment was the challenge. Joanna Lucas, a volunteer in Malaysia from 1965 to 1968 said:

> Other people are happy to do the same thing, but I look for challenges.... Some people don't want to leave their comfort zone. But I'm not that way. If I've done one thing for a couple of years, I'm already looking for the next challenge.... I was very comfortable in the Peace Corps. It could be because I welcome new experiences. You can learn from everything.

Other returned volunteers spoke of challenges they had undertaken since returning from Peace Corps. One science teacher had worked abroad in twenty different developing countries during his summers off and as he put it, "some of those were pretty dicey." Another returned to her country of service with her husband, to develop a curriculum for the university there, and to adopt her three children. Pamela Hedges has worked in seven different countries since her Peace Corps experience, in addition to raising her children overseas. Seven of the teachers have chosen to work in the inner city, or to continue teaching in urban schools, despite the option of teaching in a less demanding environment. Mary Noble said, "I'm pretty sure I wouldn't have [taken up the challenge of teaching in the inner city without having been in the Peace Corps]." Six of the teachers have gone back to visit their Peace Corps sites and remarked on the demands of traveling in the developing world. These returned volunteers had a high level of interest in taking on challenges. Returned Peace Corps volunteers continued to take on challenges, even many years since their initial Peace Corps experience.

High self-efficacy individuals exhibited less stress and depression in difficult situations. They did not engage in thought patterns which encouraged anxiety, or needless worrying about things. Nine volunteers interviewed brought up that their capacity to deal with stress was enhanced by their Peace Corps experience. Seven of these attributed

their coping ability directly to the Peace Corps. Jeanie Woods, a volunteer in Jamaica, and now an urban preschool teacher, said:

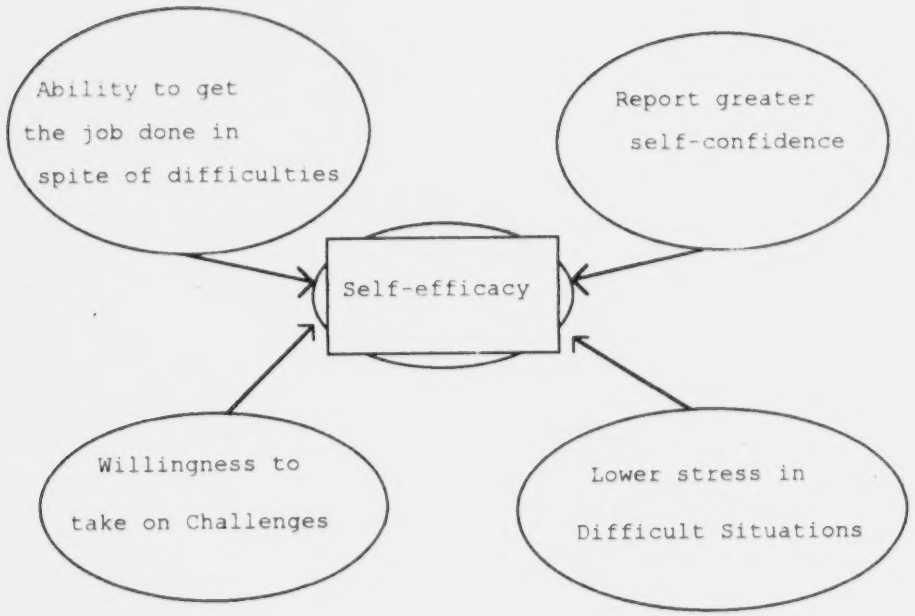
> You know, I learned to live with it. The first couple of times it happened [being overwhelmed by difficulties], I would cry. I said I cannot cry for the next two years. I will either learn to live with it or make it not so important. And so that's what I did.

Dave Strong remarked how dealt with stress on his current job, and how much better he was at dealing with stressful situations than were the other teachers at his school, who had not been Peace Corps volunteers. He made the comment:

> And another thing about Peace Corps is that it gives you a sense of perspective. I see teachers at [my school] and they get upset over the least little thing. If they had been in Peace Corps and they had had the chance to cope with the things that Peace Corps volunteers cope with, it's so much more extreme. You just can't get upset over the kinds of things these guys are getting upset about... like we always used to say in Paraguay, "tranquila," Relax, would ya? Don't get yourself worked into such a state. That's a real gift from Peace Corps.... You don't let the stuff get to you. Any Peace Corps volunteer has been in a situation that has been much worse. Poverty, suffering, injustice, incompetence, bizarre-ness, the heat, the disease, everything.

Individuals with high self-efficacy do not seek out and magnify threats, as those with low self-efficacy do. They see demands as challenges, not as threats. They can turn off needless anxiety. The returned Peace Corps volunteers attributed their ability to deal with stress to their experience in the Peace Corps.

Figure 1: Indicators of Self-efficacy


Ability to get the job done in spite of difficulties
Report greater self-confidence
Self-efficacy
Willingness to take on Challenges
Lower stress in Difficult Situations

Cultural awareness is the consciousness of other cultures and the significance that a person's cultural beliefs have on behavior and attitudes. Many of the volunteers interviewed reported a higher level of cultural awareness after Peace Corps, which they credited to their experience. Seven of the volunteers interviewed spoke specifically about their increased awareness of the significance of culture in explaining behavior.

Teachers of minority students need to not only be aware of cultural differences, but be sensitive to them as well. Empathy is an important aspect of cultural awareness, and sometimes cultural awareness is referred to as 'cultural sensitivity.' Five of the volunteers interviewed remarked

explicitly on how the Peace Corps helped them be able to feel what it was like to be culturally different.

These Peace Corps teachers had a special relationship with students who were culturally different, whether they were minorities in the school, or were just learning English. Frank Hubner, who teaches history in California, said:

> Most of the kids in [sheltered history] are from Mexico or Central America. I identify with them. I tell them stories about what it was like for me, in a situation where I didn't speak Spanish and I needed to learn Spanish very quickly... and I say, " A lot of you have had the same experience." They open up a lot when you say that.... It's a shared experience that I have with an awful lot of our kids. Seventy percent of the kids in my school are Latino.

Laura Myers said being in the Peace Corps helped her be able to feel what it was like to live in another culture as a minority, and still retain her self identity. She said:

> The Peace Corps let me feel like what it was to be a minority myself. And what it's like to negotiate in a culture that you're not part of the mainstream. And the way we have to learn to use, the way you have to culturally negotiate, and yet not feel like you're losing yourself. ...It makes me more aware of students that I have that are African American or Mexican American and they come to [my school] and it's predominately Anglo and perhaps they feel like they're losing themselves in some way.

Several teachers mentioned being able to empathize with student of different cultures because of their experience in the Peace Corps. They are not only aware of cultural

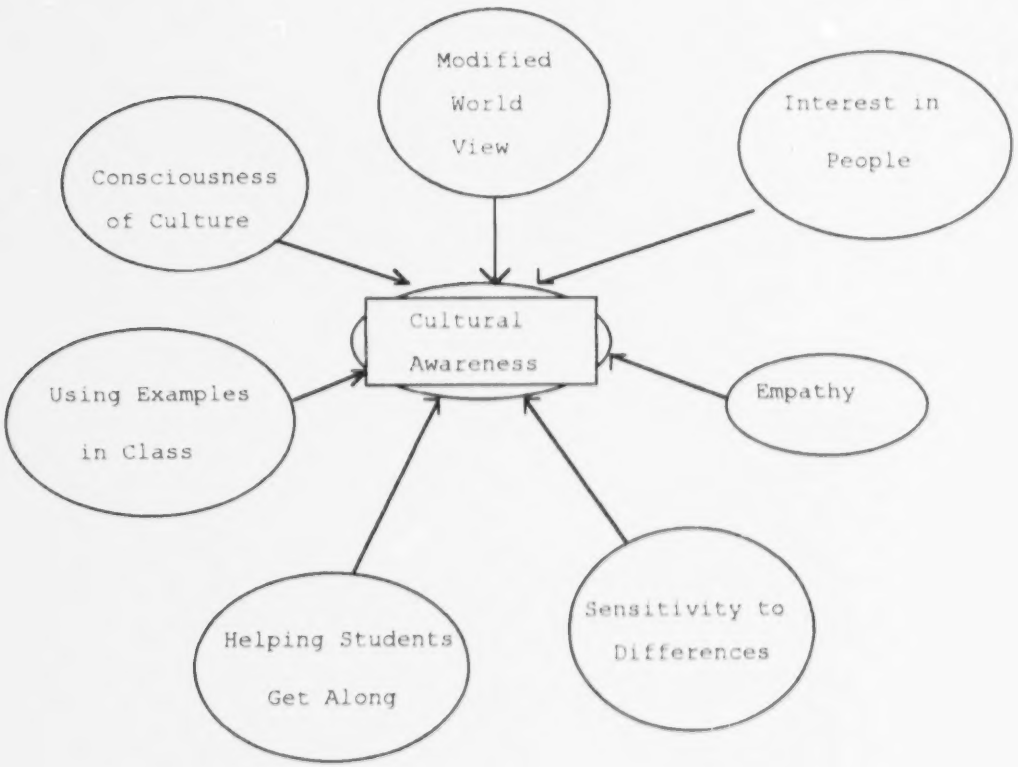
differences, but they have a sense of what these students may be feeling as they try to deal with mainstream culture.

Seven of the volunteers told of examples from other cultures that they use in class, from their Peace Corps experience. Mary Barnes related different example of art projects she has done with her student in an urban high school:

> I do one project that involves a migration, or a trip that you or your family made, and we do a triptych, a series of three paintings. So that a student in that way could relate the trip they made from their country to this country.. . .I've also done some book making things where they do some illustrations, and simple stories from their country. Doing it in English, of a traditional story. Working with students from different cultures is very rich, because they can add a lot to the classroom. And they also find it interesting to learn about other countries from each other.... The Japanese and Korean students are really good at origami, folding paper. I recently did an origami project, and had them teach the class... They knew something that the other kids didn't know, so it gave them a chance to be appreciated.

The teachers communicated their modified world views to the students, and tried to get the students to open up their perspectives. The factors that contribute to cultural awareness are shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Factors that Contribute to Cultural Awareness



Teacher efficacy is the belief in one's ability to help students learn, and also the belief that all students can learn, regardless of their home environments. Components of teacher efficacy that were mentioned in interviews of returned Peace Corps teachers included a persistence in the face of difficulties with students, belief that teaching can overcome a poor home environment, belief that student ability can be developed through education and cooperative

classroom management. Other indicators of high teacher efficacy such as time spent on instruction, frequent praise of students, relaxed and friendly classes were examined in the classroom observations.

Nine of the teachers explicitly expressed the belief that they had the ability to help students learn. However, they often tempered their statements with practical concerns. The returned Peace Corps teacher were very persistent in the face of difficulties with their students. They found ways to try and overcome roadblocks that stood in the way of a student's success in school. However, they also were very much aware that they could not succeed with one hundred percent of their students.

Pamela Hedges remarked:

> If you are weighed down by something that's much more important like your family situation, or how hungry you are, or the fact that you didn't get any sleep, there's no way you can come into the classroom and learn. It has nothing to do with how wealthy your parents are, comfortably situated you are, you just can't do it. I could give you dozens of examples of that. ...In general I think our parents are pretty supportive to teachers and they get it, that we're working together for the kid and I just wish that could be true for every public school in the country. Sadly, I just don't think it is. I think often, it's kind of an adversarial relationship. There's no question that the school can't be the parent.

Returned Peace Corps teachers were confident in their ability to teach, and worked hard to overcome difficulties that their students might have, but they believed that the home was more important to their student's success than

their ability to teach. They viewed learning as being affected by many factors, but some of the most important factors were affected by the student's home environment. They saw the learning process as being influenced by the student, the parent, and the teacher, and the teacher could not get the student to learn if the teacher was the only one invested in the process.

Most returned volunteer teachers thought that every student could learn, but that not every student could succeed, depending on the definition of success. Joanna Lucas said if the goal of success was that every student achieved a high school diploma, "then that's going to degrade the diploma." Dave Strong agreed, that every student "would succeed if you lowered the bar."

Laura Myers thought every student could succeed at learning, but was careful to define what she saw as success.

> I think that what the school can do is that the school can move a child farther along the range of their abilities given that kind of background or trait characteristic, or whatever... but I recognize that school can't take a child who has fetal alcohol syndrome and has been socially and culturally deprived for two years and turn that kid into a Rhodes scholar. That doesn't happen. Even though we'd like to think that it can happen.

Dave Strong said:

> Every kid is not going to get everything they have strengths and weaknesses. Every kid, given the latitude to choose his or her own course can succeed in life. But they can't all succeed at the same game. They're all playing the same game.

> They're all forced to play the same game in school. But when they get out of school and they choose their own route, someone's going to be a lawyer and someone's going to be a mechanic, and someone's going to be an airline pilot, and they'll succeed, if they have been able to branch out. An artist or something. But now they're all having to play the same game. So, no, I wouldn't say they all can succeed at the same game... I think in the right environment more kids will succeed than in the wrong environment. When you get personal attention, and you have teachers that try to figure you out. Try to adjust so you can succeed. It's not a guarantee, but it increases the odds.

The teachers believed ability was not fixed, and could be developed through education, but that all children couldn't succeed if the goal was set too high.

Seventy-nine percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the survey question, "When I really try, I can get through to most difficult students." Only 18% chose an ambivalent answer (Likert choice number 3, on a scale of 1 to 5, which could be interpreted as "neither agree nor disagree"), and only 3% disagreed. This drastically differs from other questions on the teacher efficacy part of the questionnaire. The percentages of agreement on questions that concerned the effect of the student's home environment were much different, and the percent of ambivalent answers (choice number 3) were much higher. Presumably, a high efficacy teacher would believe that he or she could overcome the effects of the home environment. High efficacy teachers would also believe that the classroom has a stronger influence on students than the student's home environment. But in this study, 58% agreed or strongly agreed with the

statement: "The hours in my class have little influence on students compared to the influence of their home environment," and 23% chose an ambivalent answer. This could be because 82% of teachers in this study worked in middle or high schools, while only 18% worked in elementary schools. Secondary teachers usually have shorter classes than elementary teachers, who tend to be with their students almost all day. The returned Peace Corps teachers also overwhelmingly agreed with the statement, "If parents would do more with their children, I could do more." Seventy eight percent agreed or strongly agreed with that statement, and 20% chose answer number 3, the ambivalent answer. The returned volunteer teachers in this study give strong importance to the home environment of their students, and intimated in their survey answers that the home environment is sometimes a stronger influence than the effect of the teacher.

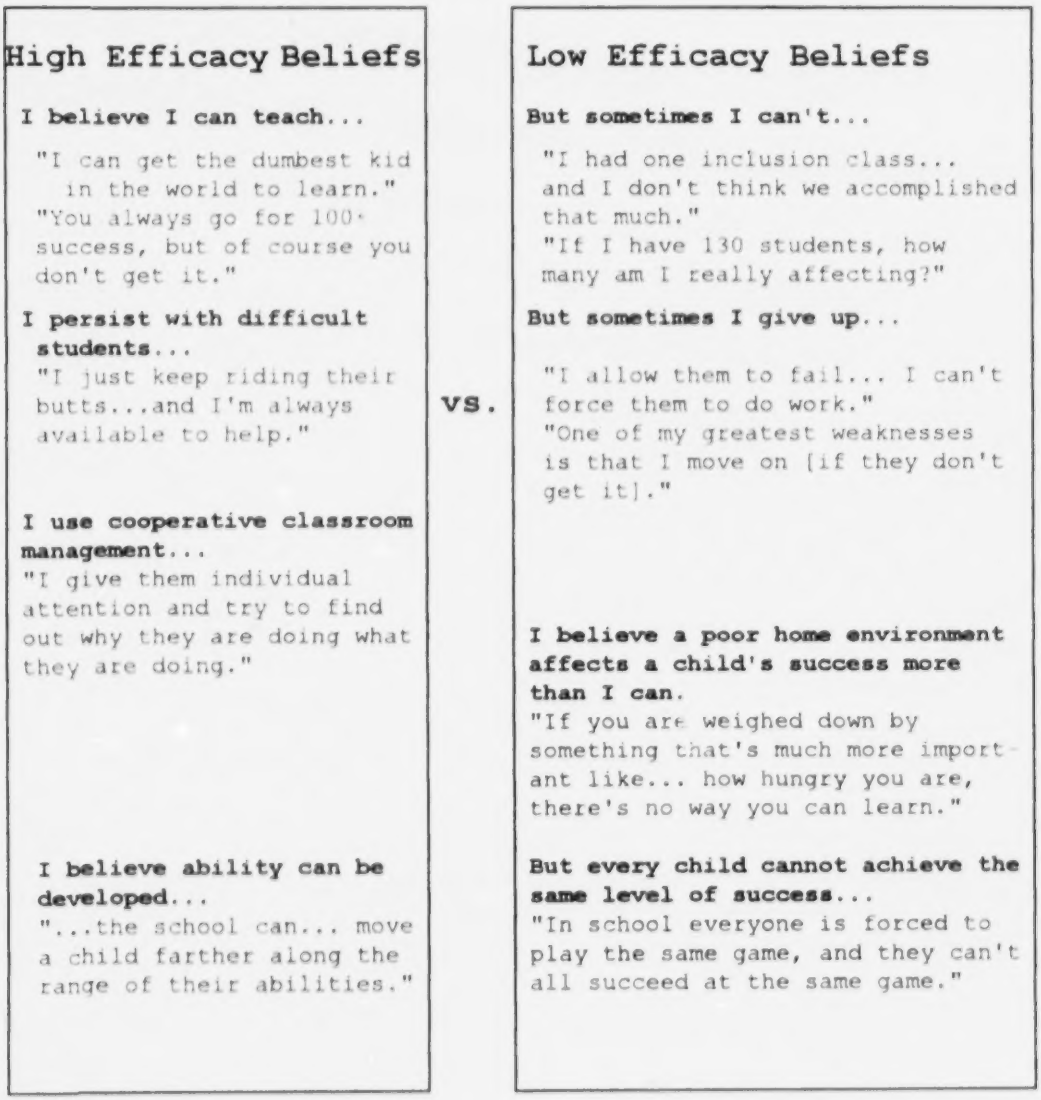
An interesting contrast is that 58% of the teacher agreed with the statement that, "The influences of a student's home experience can be overcome by good teaching," and 30% gave ambivalent answers. The returned Peace Corps teachers also disagreed (63% disagreed or strongly disagreed, 22% ambivalent) with the statement, "The amount that a student can learn is primarily related to family background." These results suggested that although the returned Peace Corps teachers think the home environment is a stronger influence on a student's learning than school is,

that they also believed that a poor home environment can be overcome. In addition, they declared that family background did not affect how much a student could learn. Further research should deal with how the teachers interpreted this statement. It seemed that they took "family background" to mean racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic background. The large majority of returned Peace Corps teachers suggested that where a student came from did not affect how far he or she could go. This view corresponded to a liberal outlook on education. In the Graul study (US Peace Corps & Graul, 1996) of returned volunteers, 42% identified themselves as "liberal on most issues," while 34% called themselves moderates, and only 10% referred to themselves as conservatives. These two questions on the teacher efficacy scale seemed to reveal a political orientation toward the power of education as a means to success for all Americans, no matter what their ethnic or socioeconomic background.

Twenty seven percent of the teachers agreed with the statement, "Even a teacher with good teaching abilities may not reach many students," and 21% were ambivalent about the statement. This indicated that although the returned Peace Corps teachers believed that they could teach, they clearly pointed out that not all students in their classes would learn, despite their best efforts. This was similar to Bandura's (1995) description of the adaptive benefits of self-efficacy specifically in relation to social reformers and innovative achievers. Individuals who performed an

especially difficult jobs in inhospitable conditions received little regular positive feedback. An example of this type of job would be the teachers in this study who were working in urban schools, teaching children in low socioeconomic classes, most of whom were not invested in the process of getting an education. They may have known they were working to the best of their ability, but their jobs required a heavy personal investment, and they were rarely entirely successful. High self-efficacy teachers are resilient after failure; instead of giving up, they try harder in the face of adversity. High self-efficacy individuals believe they can make some difference in the social circumstances of their students, their high self-efficacy allows them to continue to put forth their best efforts, even with uncertain payoffs, without getting depressed or burned out. The ambivalence in teacher efficacy beliefs is shown in Figure 10 below.

Figure 3: Ambivalence in Teacher Efficacy Beliefs


High Efficacy Beliefs
I believe I can teach...
"I can get the dumbest kid in the world to learn."
"You always go for 100% success, but of course you don't get it."
I persist with difficult students...
"I just keep riding their butts...and I'm always available to help."
I use cooperative classroom management...
"I give them individual attention and try to find out why they are doing what they are doing."
I believe ability can be developed...
"...the school can... move a child farther along the range of their abilities."
VS.
Low Efficacy Beliefs
But sometimes I can't...
"I had one inclusion class... and I don't think we accomplished that much."
"If I have 130 students, how many am I really affecting?"
But sometimes I give up...
"I allow them to fail... I can't force them to do work."
"One of my greatest weaknesses is that I move on [if they don't get it]."
I believe a poor home environment affects a child's success more than I can.
"If you are weighed down by something that's much more important like... how hungry you are, there's no way you can learn."
But every child cannot achieve the same level of success...
"In school everyone is forced to play the same game, and they can't all succeed at the same game."

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At the end of the interview, the teachers were asked to rank the importance their Peace Corps experience in its effect on their personality and in its effect on their teaching, compared with life experiences like graduate school, or marriage. Common themes in this part of the interview included speculation on whether the Peace Corps experience had a greater impact because the teacher was young or just out of college. Some Peace Corps teachers reported that their career goals had shifted as a result of their experience in the Peace Corps.

Nine of the volunteers interviewed said that their Peace Corps experience influenced them to go into teaching. Teaching had not been a career goal for these nine, but they found that they were good at it, or that they enjoyed it, or they liked the lifestyle that went along with teaching. As Mary Noble put it:

> It made a big difference in my life, because when I came back, I didn't want to go back to college teaching....I wanted to use more of the international experience that I had, and the experience of working with a variety of people. There's a feeling of doing something that was needed, and appreciated. Once having that feeling, it's hard to go back to just a job that gives you money. I would've thought that teaching in a high school after teaching in college was a career drop. I would've thought that. ...I like the simpleness of being a high school teacher.

Joanna Lucas also said that Peace Corps "was important because it showed me that I was a 'natural' towards teaching."

The interviews provided strong evidence of the effect of the Peace Corps on self-efficacy and cultural awareness. Teachers demonstrated high levels of self-efficacy in their answers to questions, comments, and stories. They described their Peace Corps experience as difficult, but they were more self confident after having done it. Their belief in their ability to teach in general was strong, but was tempered by experience. Overall, the teachers who were interviewed rated the Peace Corps experience as very important in affecting their personality and their teaching.

Conclusions

Data gained from the survey, the interviews, and the observations all led to the conclusion that returned Peace Corps teachers had high levels of self-efficacy and cultural awareness. The data that described the teachers' beliefs of teacher efficacy was mixed. Returned Peace Corps volunteer teachers described the Peace Corps experience as very important in affecting their personality and their teaching.

Returned Peace Corps teachers had a higher mean score on the scale of self-efficacy than other populations of normal adults. In addition, they viewed the Peace Corps experience as a mastery experience that increased their self-efficacy. They referred to their Peace Corps experience as difficult, but felt that because they had gotten through it successfully, they believed they could get

almost any job done. The former volunteer teachers said that the experience had increased their self-confidence. They spoke of having lower stress in difficult situations, being willing to take on challenges, and having the ability to get the job done in spite of difficulties. They attributed these facets of their personality directly to their experience in the Peace Corps.

The returned Peace Corps teachers also demonstrated a high level of cultural awareness during the interviews. They were conscious of the significance of culture and expressed empathy for people of different cultures. They said they knew better how students of different cultures must feel because of their own experience in the Peace Corps. They demonstrated sensitivity to the differences in their student because of their culture, and had a high interest in working with people of a different culture. They tried to help students from different cultures get along. Returned Peace Corps teachers used many examples from other cultures in their classes. All of the Peace Corps teachers interviewed reported that the experience had modified their world view. They saw themselves as a citizens of the world, and had a better understanding of the views of other cultures. They tried to provide experiences for their students that would allow them to expand their own views of the world.

The returned Peace Corps teachers had a strong belief in their own ability to teach. They used cooperative

interaction and classroom management, and had friendly and relaxed classes, both of which are associated with teachers with high self-efficacy (Ashton & Webb, 1986). They used very little class time for non-instructional activities, which is related to high teacher efficacy (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Their mean score on the teacher efficacy scale, however, was comparable to other populations of teachers and prospective teachers. When interviewed, most returned volunteers who were teachers believed that even though they had the personal ability to teach every student, but that not all students could learn. They attributed a student's failure to learn to their innate disability, distractions from their home environment, poor attendance, or emotional problems. Some of these factors they felt they could handle if other variables were in place, such as small classes, parental support and good attendance on the part of the student. But sometimes the other factors that limited a student's learning would overwhelm their ability to get their students to learn. They believed that all students could succeed at increasing their learning in school, but that not all students could meet some criteria for success, such as a high school diploma. If the definition of success were carefully crafted, and the standard low enough, then most students could succeed, but not all.

Despite the number of years intervening between their Peace Corps experience and the time of this study, the teachers ranked Peace Corps as very important in affecting

them personally and in influencing their teaching. Seven of the teachers interviewed had been volunteers as long as twenty years ago and four of these were volunteers more than thirty years ago. They thought some of the power of the influence was because they had been young and impressionable at the time of their volunteer experience. The teachers also listed the Peace Corps as a major reason why they chose to become teachers. They said the Peace Corps experience was very important in influencing their personal development and affected their world view, their rejection of materialism, and their capacity for judgment. It also affected what they teach and how they try to get their students to learn.

Clearly the Peace Corps experience was very powerful in terms of its ability to affect self-efficacy and cultural awareness, and to a lesser extent, teacher efficacy. Returned volunteer teachers rank it as very important, even many years later. The self-efficacy gained from the experience is robust, generalizable, and resilient, even as much as thirty years later.

Cultural awareness was more difficult to document than self-efficacy. The data from the interviews supported the construct of cultural awareness, but the researcher was unable to observe many examples of cultural awareness in the classroom observations. Although all the teachers observed seemed comfortable working with their multicultural populations of students, the observations did not provide

much explicit evidence of a sophisticated awareness of the student's culture. That may be because most subjects, other than social studies, do not deal with the issue of culture primarily. Most days in the classroom, the teacher does not deal with culture explicitly. The concept of culture is complicated to introduce to the classroom, even for returned Peace Corps social studies teachers (Wilson, 1986). Rios (1993) put forth that even a teacher with extensive experience with minority students may not exhibit sophisticated thinking about multicultural education. Just as it was not practical to measure this construct with a Likert type scale, it was also complicated to observe in a classroom visit. A list of behaviors that indicate high cultural awareness would be difficult to create. Cultural awareness affects some interactions between teacher and student, and some choices of curriculum and teaching method, but by no means all of choices. It seems to affect the choices of curriculum for social studies teachers more than teachers of other subjects. A long term study might be necessary to effectively study this construct.

Although the Peace Corps experience seemed to lead to increased self-efficacy and cultural awareness in teachers who are returned Peace Corps volunteers, the implication for practice are varied. Making a two year Peace Corps type experience a requirement for obtaining teacher certification is not practical. However, some of the premises elucidated in this study may be important for teacher training.

The results of this study lend further support to research describing the effect of teacher preparation programs in which practice teaching is done abroad, or in another culture (Cooper, Beare & Thorman, 1990; Mahan & Rains, 1990; Mahan & Stachowski, 1985, 1990, 1995; McKay & Montgomery, 1995; Stauffer, 1973). Similarly, that same research indicated that prospective teachers who do their practice teaching abroad reported more self-confidence, and greater cultural awareness. Further research into cross cultural teacher preparation experiences may lead to a drastic revision of current preparation programs.

It is important to realize the power of an experience that builds self-efficacy to such a high degree. The participants in this study described immense learning that took place in their Peace Corps experience. The self-efficacy that was gained was robust enough to be mentioned even twenty to thirty years later. The teachers in this study reported that they were still more willing to take on challenges, whether they be job-related or personal. They spoke of being able to tolerate adverse situations with less stress. Formal centers of education, such as schools and colleges, can take advantage of the tremendous personal growth that comes from a Peace Corps type experience. Programs and activities that mimic the effects of a mastery experience such as the Peace Corps could be adapted for use in other arenas, such as on-the-job training.

This study clearly indicated that the Peace Corps experience usually had a profound effect on a teacher's personality, and that effect had the power to enhance the ability to teach. However, even in the small sample in this study, a few returned volunteers did not consider the impact of the experience to profoundly effect their teaching. If a Peace Corps type experience did not affect a significant portion of participants, then its value in the preparation of teachers would be limited. Further research of the volunteers who do not consider the experience important in shaping their abilities should be pursued.

Principals and companies that fund further training ask if they should preferentially hire or fund returned Peace Corps volunteers. It seems that returned Peace Corps volunteers who are teachers usually gain important learnings from their experience. Their self-efficacy and cultural awareness are usually increased. However, other important qualities of teachers, such as good communication, long term planning capability, attention to detail, and tolerance for the constrictions of a school environment would need to be considered as well.

Appendix: Questionnaire

This questionnaire is a part of a study I am doing for a doctoral dissertation at Catholic University. I am investigating the qualities of returned Peace Corps Volunteers who are currently teaching. Your input is valuable and will help not only in defining the characteristics of returned volunteer teachers, but also in training teachers for classrooms here in the United States.

Directions:

For Part I, please give me some information about yourself. Your answers will never be associated with your name or the name of your school.

For Part II, please choose the number of the answer that best describes your feeling, from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

In Part III, feel free to add any comments. I would be glad to send the results of this study if you wish.

Thank you for completing this survey.

Sincerely,

Cathy Cross
(410-418-9728)

Part I

1. Peace Corps Country of Service _____ Years of Service _____
2. Job Assignment in the Peace Corps _____
3. Grade Levels in School Where you Currently Teach _____
4. Subject or Grade(s) You Teach _____
5. Number of Years Experience Teaching (including any teaching in the Peace Corps) _____
6. Highest Degree You Have Obtained _____
7. How would you describe the your school? Urban ___ Suburban ___ Rural ____ Other _____
8. In what city and state do you live? _____

Part II	Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
1. When I make plans, I am certain I can make them work.	1	2	3	4	5
2. One of my problems is that I cannot get down to work when I should.	1	2	3	4	5
3. If I can't do a job the first time, I keep trying until I can.	1	2	3	4	5
4. When I set important goals for myself, I rarely achieve them.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I give up on things before completing them.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I avoid facing difficulties.	1	2	3	4	5
7. If something looks too complicated, I will not even bother to try it.	1	2	3	4	5
8. When I have something unpleasant to do, I stick to it until I finish it.	1	2	3	4	5
9. When I decide to do something, I go right to work on it.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
10. When trying to learn something new, I soon give up if I am not initially successful.	1	2	3	4	5
11. When unexpected problems occur, I don't handle them well.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I avoid trying to learn new things when they look too difficult for me.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Failure just makes me try harder.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I feel insecure about my ability to do things.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I am a self-reliant person.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I give up easily.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I do not seem capable of dealing with most problems that come up in life.	1	2	3	4	5
18. If a student masters a new concept quickly, this might be because I know the necessary steps in teaching that concept.	1	2	3	4	5
19. When the grades of my students improve it is usually because I found more effective teaching approaches.	1	2	3	4	5
20. When I really try, I can get through to most difficult students.	1	2	3	4	5
21. If a student did not remember information I gave in a previous lesson, I would know how to increase his/her retention in the next lesson.	1	2	3	4	5
22. When a student does better than usual, many times it is because I exerted a little extra effort.	1	2	3	4	5
23. If a student in my class becomes disruptive and noisy, I feel assured that I know some techniques to redirect him quickly.	1	2	3	4	5
24. If one of my students could not do a class assignment, I would be able to accurately assess whether the assignment was at the correct level of difficulty.	1	2	3	4	5
25. When a student is having difficulty with an assignment, I am usually able to adjust it to his/her level.	1	2	3	4	5
26. When a student gets a better grade than he usually gets, it is usually because I found better ways of teaching that student.	1	2	3	4	5
27. A teacher is very limited in what he/she can achieve because a student's home environment is a large influence on his/her achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
28. If students are not disciplined at home, they aren't likely to accept any discipline.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
29. The hours in my class have little influence on students compared to the influence of their home environment.	1	2	3	4	5
30. The amount that a student can learn is primarily related to family background.	1	2	3	4	5
31. The influences of a student's home experience can be overcome by good teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
32. If parents would do more with their children, I could do more.	1	2	3	4	5
33. Even a teacher with good teaching abilities may not reach many students.	1	2	3	4	5

Part III

Feel free to add any comments you wish. If you would like a copy of the results of this study, please provide your name and address. (Don't feel you must limit your comments to this little space, use the back!)

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